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ABSTRACT

The articles in this journal for reading teachers stress the importance of comprehension in the reading process. The topics discussed include the following: inferences and comprehension, the learning process involved in comprehension, the gifted student and reading comprehension, the cloze procedure, language clues to reading comprehension, improving reading comprehension in the intermediate grades, and a class project for reading a book in an hour. Most articles include practical applications for the classroom and a bibliography on the topic. Book reviews of professional reading materials for reading teachers conclude the journal. (HAI)

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Suzanne Jund
Editor

WISCONSIN STATE READING ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

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Theme: Focus on Comprehension

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I prepare this President's Message to the membership, the signs of winter are around us... yet...I know that by the time you read it, the first hints of spring should be with us. Similarly, I see our goal to promote comprehensive reading programming throughout Wisconsin caught in the throes of hesitancy and questioning by many Wisconsin educators...yet... I am sure, that like spring will arrive, the combined efforts of conscientious educators across the state can only bring our goal to a successful conclusion.

By now you have received the first of the WSRA Informational Briefs Re: Chapter 29 (Sec. 118.015). If these have not answered some of your questions, contact the WSRA leadership and express your questions, concerns, and observations. Hopefully, these same Briefs have provided boards of education and district administrators across the state with answers to some of their questions about the new legislation. Probably, you have already been approached by your own district administrator regarding your district's role in promoting comprehensive reading programming.

Local councils also have a vital role in communicating with area school districts and in offering whatever services they can to assist in achieving these goals. These councils hold the true resource in their membership, the very people that boards of education and administrators will be calling upon to assist with the development of local needs assessments and program philosophies. As reading teachers, in and out of the classrooms, we must play our part in giving local leadership. Councils must feel free to call upon the state organization for assistance in this task.

Together, we can help to bring to Wisconsin the recognition it so richly deserves and has received so often as a leader in the nation in sound comprehensive education.

John Kinnett,
President

STATE COORDINATOR'S MESSAGE

CONGRATULATIONS TO LOCAL COUNCILS!

One of the real highlights of the WSRA Board of Director's meeting in Madison on January 28 was the reporting of local council activities. Regular council representatives, other board members, and several board officers spent more than an hour in discussion of the councils. Everyone present was impressed with the excellent programs and activities that are going on across the state.

The board encourages local councils to share these meetings with other councils in the state. This can be accomplished through dissemination of your newsletters to all councils and by inviting members of nearby councils to your meetings. During the year some councils have noted attendance by members from three or four neighboring councils. Meetings about parents, administrators, assessment, and books for children are examples of program topics that can be especially helpful to others.

There has been great variety in the choice of programs and it is obvious that local problems and needs are truly being served by local councils. You are doing an excellent job in helping to improve reading in your respective areas.

Your president, vice president, vice president-elect, and state coordinator have visited about half the councils at this point and are scheduled to meet with the remaining councils before the end of the school year. Our visits have been a most rewarding experience and we look forward to visiting the rest of you.

I hope all of you will continue to have a good year. A special congratulations to those councils'

members who have planned and carried out these very successful meetings!

Don Benz
State Coordinator

WSRA COMMITTEES REPORT:

A Summary

BUDGET AND DUES COMMITTEE:

Marion Gratz reported that the seven member committee has spent many hours planning the 1978-79 budget. Current committee chairmen were asked to evaluate their budget allocations and make recommendations for next year. An estimated budget was presented to the Executive Board on January 28, 1978. Ms. Gratz wishes to thank all WSRA and local council leaders who have donated their professional expertise, precious time, endless efforts, and personal talents to carry on WSRA functions.

PARENTS AND READING COMMITTEE:

Mrs. Juliana Rhoten described the activities of the newly formed committee. During the committee's initial meeting in June of 1977 a survey was developed to assess concerns and activities pertaining to parental involvement among WSRA's local councils. Sixteen of the twenty-one councils have responded to the survey. In general the surveys revealed that local councils would welcome specific ideas and materials to promote parental involvement.

PUBLICITY AND ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE:

Dr. Art Schoeller and Mr. Ralph Dorn have activated a statewide, fourteen member committee which serves as a rapid information dissemination system to local councils. WSRA officers, state committees, and local councils wanting to send material for distribution through these fourteen members should contact one of the co-chairmen. News releases for local newspapers, television, and radio stations may also be handled by contacting the co-chairmen.

The committee has sent a news release about the WSRA Spring Conference to all state education

associations for inclusion in their Newsletters and Journals. Dr. Russ Burgett's conference committee and the Platteville Council will present "Selling Reading" at the Sheraton Inn in Madison beginning at 5:00 p.m. on March 31 and continuing on Saturday, April 1, 1978.

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE:

Paul Majerle explained that a statement of "Policies and Procedures for WSRA Publications" is in the final stages of development and will be ready to present to the Executive Board at the spring meeting. The policies and prices for advertising in our state Journal have been adopted. He noted that we hope to be accepting advertising as early as April 1 for the May, 1978 issue. The major task remaining to be completed this year is the writing of a job description for the WSRA Journal's editor.

CANDIDATES FOR WSRA OFFICE

1978-79

Candidates for Vice President-Elect:

Dr. Robert McKeag (UW-Oshkosh)
Mr. Melvin Yanow (Milwaukee Public Schools)

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RESEARCH UPDATE:

Inferences and Comprehension

by

Doug Vance, Reading Consultant
Madison East High School

Most teachers are aware that children use inferences to aid in comprehension, and see that ability grows with age and exposure to reading. Recent research in constructive theories of memory (Bransford and Franks, 1971; Bransford, Nitsch and Franks, 1977) have shown that people use inferences in order to construct meaning in memory. Research in discourse analysis, or memory for reading, beginning with Binet and Henri (1894), and Bartlett (1932), has demonstrated that people do not merely repeat what they have heard or read, nor do they use strictly associative memory in recall. Instead, they come to a memory task with preexisting frameworks, or schema (Bobrow and Norman, 1975), which strongly affect the way individuals process, store, and retrieve information in memory. This paper will discuss the kinds of inferences used in comprehending, the development of the ability to use inferences, and some possible areas of research based on the implications of this theory.

John Anderson (1976) identifies two kinds of inferences--strategic inference systems which involve logical operations and drawing conclusions from specific premises, and natural inference systems which involve few constraints on the possible inferences to be made. Anderson conducted experiments on natural inferences and concluded that "humans are much better at recognizing the validity of an inference than in generating that inference." (p. 336)

Rumelhart and Ortony (1977) identified several uses for inferences:

A. Predictors of as yet unobserved input (if we walk into a restaurant we expect to find a waiter, a menu, a table, etc.).

B. Inferring the existence of a whole from the observation of a part (if we see an eye we infer a face).

C. Filling unspecified values ("Then he saw it." What was it?).

D. Functional reasoning (i.e., syllogistic or analogical reasoning).

E. Drawing conclusions from premises. (What do you think will happen next?)

Paris (1975) and Paris and Lindauer (1977) have attempted to develop a theory to explain the development of the ability to use inferences. They compare children's ability to change remembered information into simpler representations to Piaget's theories of assimilation and accommodation. They identify four central tenets of constructive theory:

A. Exact reproductions are rare. When people recall information, they change it to make it easier to remember.

B. Transformations involve omissions and embellishment.

C. Constructive memory is determined by context, schemata, cognitive abilities, and the sociohistory of the individual.

D. Memory is dynamic; information can be transformed in memory and during successive retrievals.

They go on to cite experimental evidence for constructive memory. As evidence for semantic integration they point to a study by Paris and Carter (1973) which showed that children use inferences from sentences to derive additional relationships. Children were unable to distinguish between sentences which had been presented (true premise) and new

sentences which were semantically consistent with the premises (true inference). Paris and Mahoney (1974) conducted a similar experiment using pictures as both presentation and retrieval cues and found similar results, leading them to conclude that the results "implicate a constructive process for memory that is common to visual and verbal modalities."

Paris and Upton (1976) conducted an experiment designed to discover the differences among types of inferences and the developmental progression of these abilities in children. They divided inferences into two major categories: contextual inferences and lexical inferences. Contextual inferences include logical presuppositions which are the pre-existing conditions necessary to make the passage true, i.e., "How could she have learned this?"; and inferred consequences which are the probable outcomes or conclusions of the passage, i.e., "What will happen next?" Lexical inferences include semantic entailment where an object such as a canary is inferred to be a subset of a larger class, i.e., a bird; and implied instrument where a verb such as, "to dig," implies an instrument, i.e., a shovel, in order to be accomplished. The authors read six paragraphs, seven to nine sentences in length, to twelve children each in grades K-5. Afterward they asked four literal comprehension questions and four inferential questions, one for each of the subcategories of inferences. Performance improved across grades with students doing better at inferences than literal comprehension items. While lexical inferences were consistently easier, students made the greatest growth in the ability to make contextual inferences.

Paris and Upton conducted a second experiment to determine the development of the ability to make inferences. They presented the same stories to sixteen students each in grades K, 2, and 4. They added a free recall period which followed a ten-minute memory game after all six paragraphs were presented. They found that kindergarten children remembered an average of 1.9 ideas per story in free recall, second graders 4.4, and fourth graders 9.3. They then investigated the relationship between comprehension and free recall by computing a multiple regression analysis to determine which category of questions best predicted free recall performance. Over 65% of the variance was accounted for by grade, but a further 10.3% was accounted for by contextual inference

questions. Within grades contextual inference accounted for 33.2% in kindergarten, 46% in second grade and 67.2% in fourth grade showing a clear growth in this ability. Paris and Upton concluded "We regard this as tentative evidence that children's abilities to infer elaborate relationships such as presuppositions and consequences may be critical for the abstraction and retention of meaning from prose."

If inferences are important for understanding of discourse, how can they be measured? This has been the central problem that has prevented discourse analysis from becoming a truly respectable science prior to this decade. Recent developments in discourse analysis hold some promise. Rumelhart (1975) and Thorndyke (1977) have each proposed a story grammar which breaks stories down into their constituent parts. These have been developed for simple stories such as fables and folk tales. (For an explanation see Cunningham and Foster (1978) in the January issue of Reading Teacher.)

Meanwhile a number of researchers including Kintasch (1974), Grimes (1975), Meyer (1975) and Frederickson (1972, 1976) have developed propositional analyses for discourse which allowed them to look at the hierarachical ordering of propositions, or complete thought units, across an entire passage. They determine from retelling which propositions have been recalled, which elaborated, and which have been collapsed or combined. In one of the most interesting studies Mandler and Johnson (1977) have combined propositional analysis with Rumelhart's story grammar. Unfortunately, they only looked at accuracy of recall and not the types of errors including inferences, in recall.

Paris and Lindauer (1977) propose the following framework for evaluating inferential constructive processing:

A. Constructive operations performed during encoding, such as making inferences and drawing conclusions.

B. Constructive changes in memory representations during storage; these include reorganization in memory, recalling and rehearsing, and the modification of schema by adding or deleting information.

C. Constructive operations performed during remembering; these are influenced by the demands of the memory task, the retrieval cues, and development of remembering strategies over time.

Clearly the way has been paved for a number of interesting experiments in constructive processing of discourse. One line of inquiry is that of R. C. Anderson (1977). He has conducted a number of studies examining the context or schema from which a story is comprehended. In one study Anderson, et. al. (1976) presented two ambiguous stories (one about Rocky struggling to "escape" and another about a foursome sitting down to "play") to students in a music class and a gym class. In the gym class 64% thought Rocky was about a wrestler, while 71% of the music class thought it was about a convict about to escape. In the music class 71% thought the second story was about a string quartet, while 72% of the gym class thought it was about a foursome playing bridge. Pichert and Anderson (1977) conducted a study to determine the effects of expectation on recall. They presented "The House Story" about two boys playing hooky at one boy's house to three groups of college students. One group was told to pretend they were potential buyers of the house, a second group was told to pretend they were potential burglars, and the third group acted as the control. Subjects read for two minutes, then worked on the WRAT for twelve minutes, and then wrote down everything they could remember about the story. After seven days they were tested again. Those who were potential burglars remembered best those things which could be stolen. Potential buyers acted very much like the control group. Pichert and Anderson concluded "It was an idea's significance in terms of a given perspective that influenced whether it was learned and, independently, whether it was recalled."

In conclusion, schema theory seems to provide a framework for understanding constructive processes in memory. The fact that children make inferences, and the types of inferences they make could provide a framework for studying these processes. It is clearly more interesting to study the errors that children make in inferential processing of discourse than merely to study accuracy of recall, because errors serve as windows to the constructive processes much as miscues provide windows to the reading process. They show how the process works, and what happens when it breaks down.

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LEARNING HOW TO COMPREHEND

by

Lois L. Rodgers, Teacher
Oshkosh Public Schools
Oshkosh, Wisconsin

Once upon a time, many lessons ago, I heard a school teacher story. When or where I heard it, I can't say, as that information has unfortunately spiraled out of my memory. The story, however, has always remained a favorite of mine, and I'd like to tell it to you.

The story concerns a nine year old fourth grade boy who was an excellent oral reader. His teacher was running short of time one day, and since her daily lesson plans showed that the children were supposed to "cover" the next story in reading before the bell, she decided to have this little fellow read the whole story to the entire class. The other children were to follow along in their books.

The boy was invited to sit in front and read. Manfully he came forward, sat down, and proceeded to verbalize the entire selection. His execution was flawless. When he was finished, the flushed and happy teacher glanced at the clock and found that there were a few minutes still remaining.

"That was very good," she said to the boy as he walked back to his seat. "Perhaps in the time we have left, you can tell us quickly what the story was about, and how you feel about it."

The little boy sat down, thought for a moment, then said, "I can't do that teacher. I was so busy

reading I wasn't listening."

Perhaps you have heard that story before, and if you have, maybe it gave you the same pangs of unrest that many teachers have felt about teaching reading. "Am I really doing a good job?" must be a question that all of us ask ourselves. "Does this child understand? How can I best help him understand? Why aren't the medians in the context areas higher?" These are good questions, but teachers are not always sure of the answers. Sometimes my own answers to these questions gave me an uncomfortable feeling.

So, one day a long time ago, I decided to meet the problems of reading comprehension head-on. I have found since that there is no easy way to cut, shorten, abridge, edit, or circumvent the path which must be taken in teaching a child how to successfully comprehend written materials. There is no one-remedy, no cure-all, for the child who does not comprehend what he "reads." There is no exact solution to all comprehension difficulties, because we all know that lack of comprehension can be caused by many factors. But I have also found that a multi-technique approach that is used in sequential order can remedy in a practical and interesting way many of the problems encountered in helping a child to comprehend. I have also found that children can learn to use these techniques in sequential order on an individual basis after proper class instruction and that they can use them successfully on their own. It is my personal feeling that we are inclined to spoon-feed the same lessons over and over again until the responsibility for learning how to comprehend the printed word has fallen upon the teacher, and not on the learner. By mastering a learning method, a sequential attack plan, an orderly approach, a proper procedure, the children can cope more adequately in the classroom reading situation by using an increasingly complex methodology. It is then that the responsibility for learning how to learn falls where it ought to fall, onto the shoulders of the learner.

So there began a long process of finding ways to build, use, and have the children learn how to use a procedure which would enable them to learn how to learn to comprehend. Much of the process in developing this procedure was trial and error. But finally, based on information which the class supplied, we incorporated the techniques that could best be used to accomplish our goal into a sequential procedure.

Comprehension Procedure

Lesson One, Session 1
Scanning and Locating

1. Prepare yourself. Read the manual for a broad overview of stated objectives; note the commercial materials offered; decide what the author's purpose is in the material which the children will be reading. While you are reading the text that the children will be reading, look for "natural breaks" in the materials in the event that you have to split a session. Note: When the children have their initial exposure to this procedure, I prefer to use materials (ditto copies) that are not from the basal materials. This allows the children to number the lines and to underline words and phrases as it becomes necessary. It affords me the opportunity to make a quick copy of the exact difficulties that the children suggest. It is also easier to collect the materials when necessary. If you use a commercial worksheet, copied from a spirit master, the questions which usually follow should be put on a separate page so the children won't see them. There is a time to use them, but now is not that time. Suggestions for sources of some of these materials will be found at the end of this article.

2. Give each child a scanner (a 3" x 5" piece of colored construction paper). At each session we use a different color, and each child is given a new scanner. Let him put his name on it.

3. Give each child a copy of the story face down.

4. With you positioned at the chalk board, tell the children that one line at a time they are going to scan the material you have given them; and tell them that they may underline every word or group of words that they can't pronounce or which they don't understand. Tell them that the scanning is to be done rapidly to locate things in this particular story that they don't understand immediately. Tell them that scanning one line at a time will help because they are going to list their suggestions on the board line by line.

5. Have them turn their papers face up and number the lines beginning with the number one. Number to the bottom of the page, and then tell the students to put their scanners under line one and wait.

6. When all of the children have numbered (and let them do it!) and the scanners are in place, tell them to underline in line one only the things they aren't sure about and then to let you know by raising their hands if there is anything you should write on the board. As they suggest, you write. If there are three suggestions in one line, you will have three number ones in your first column. Leave three blank lines numbered one in a second column for later word clarification. Your board will look like this:

1. feign	1. _____
1. miniature	1. _____
1. carousel	1. _____

Note: A board liner, such as a music teacher might use, with chalk pieces two and four removed, works well here.

7. Continue in this fashion until all lines have been scanned, underlined, and recorded on the chalkboard. (Keep your own copy flowing as well.) Don't ignore a single suggestion!

8. Collect the story and put pencils and scanners away.

The next part of this first session is a discussion of listed, troublesome vocabulary. The teacher's job here is to guide the discussion and board tabulation. Having read the story in advance, the teacher would know, for example, if the word moccasin meant shoe or snake. The children may not know this so put down both suggestions, but keep them from going too far astray as might happen with a word such as run. Later, when the students paraphrase, they will be able to pick the proper meaning by using the surrounding context. In the meantime, their vocabularies increase and the ensuing learning experience can be very rewarding.

9. Using the list on the board, have the children give words to explain the items in column one. Write their suggestions down as succinctly as you are able in column two and work down the list until it is finished. Every child who has a contribution to make may do so.

These nine steps constitute Session 1 of Lesson One. The first time we work through this procedure

in my classroom we work through Lesson One in its entirety. The materials I choose are usually limited in length to one page or less. We begin this work the first week of the school year, but there is no reason why it couldn't be started at any time.

At the end of Session 1, the board work could look like this:

1. feign	1. pretend
1. miniature	1. very small
1. carousel	1. merry-go-round

Up to this point, I do not feel that we have done any real reading. We have scanned, we have located information, and we have discussed word and phrase meanings. The children have used the beginning steps of a procedure which will eventually lead to their reading. But until we grasp the author's purpose, until there is a meeting of the minds, there is no reading. The children are, however, prepared to read, and in this preparation, they are learning how to learn.

Lesson One, Session 2
Paraphrasing

1. Give the underlined papers back to the children.

2. Have a volunteer verbalize the first sentence as it appears on the printed story. After he has accomplished this, ask him to read it a second time removing the underlined word (words) and inserting a meaning (meanings) from the board.

3. Ask the class what the new sentence means. Listen to all explanations.

4. Ask how many in the class agree that the sentence means "_____." If there is a dissenter, continue the discussion until the class agrees upon a meaning. (If you have had a time gap between Session 1 and Session 2, it will be necessary to put the columns back on the board before the beginning of this session.)

5. When the class comes to an agreement on sentence meaning for the first sentence, proceed to sentence 2 and follow the same procedure. As you finish a paragraph, let volunteers tell you what the main idea of the paragraph is.

6. Continue to the end of the material. If unused definitions appear in column 2, erase them as you go.

7. Allow the children to copy the proper meanings onto their papers above the corresponding entry.

8. Allow plenty of time for this copying, and check the spellings yourself. Allow the children who have copied correctly to assist you with other children.

9. Ask a volunteer to read back a paragraph using the author's words.

10. Ask another volunteer to tell you what the paragraph means. (NOW it can be done.)

11. Continue with all of the paragraphs to the end of the material by repeating steps nine and ten.

12. Ask someone to read the title of the article to you.

13. Ask the children to tell you why they think this is a good title.

14. Let volunteers suggest other titles. Discuss them.

Lesson Two, Session 1
Recitation

1. Give each child his own paper, a pair of scissors, and a clean sheet of lined paper.

2. Place three shoe boxes (or something similar in size) in the front of the room where they are easily accessible. While the children watch, letter the ends of the boxes as follows:

Choice (4)
Why (2)
How did (2)

3. Ask the children to use the lined paper to make up four questions about the story for box one. Tell them that these four questions can be questions of their choice, that they may include a spelling word, ask who is in the story if there are characters, etc. (I write who, what, when, and where on the board at this point, but as a suggestion only.)

4. Ask students to write two questions that begin with WHY.

5. Ask them to write two questions that begin with HOW.

6. Tell the children that when they have finished their questions to cut them neatly apart and put them in the proper boxes. Tell them that they will be used for a reading game to be played later. Suggest that if they have extra time before the game that they study the story. (Use the word study.)

7. As each child puts his questions in the box and has finished his contributions to the game, take his paper.

8. Play the game by dividing the group into teams, drawing for questions, and keeping score. Discuss errors. Put all questions back for the children to use at their leisure.

Lesson Three, Session 1
Testing

1. The teacher draws five questions from the boxes, and uses them as test questions. The children write their answers on their scanners.

2. The children exchange scanners, correct, and grade the tests.

3. Grades are not taken on the first exposure to this procedure, but they are taken in future cases. In either case, discussion of errors is held, and children are encouraged to express their opinions on how to get better test scores.

Lesson Four, Session 1
(Optional)

1. If you used a commercial spirit master to ditto the story and you have reproduced the questions which followed, use them now. Have the children read the questions aloud, round-robin style.

2. Have the children answer the questions in writing.

3. Exchange papers in the class, correct them and take grades.

Note: If you want to set the stage for a demonstration of NEED at the beginning of the school year, give students a spirit copy of a story and put the questions on a second sheet. Let them read the story as many times as they have time for in a 20 minute period. Tell them in advance they are going to have a test when the time is up. Then give them the test. When the tests have been corrected, the teacher politely declines to take the grades and offers to help them learn how to study and remember what they study.

Epilogue

In our reading classes, we work through this procedure three times as an entire group. Then we break into our achievement groups and do our underlining and meaning insertions in the workbooks. For the times when our reading materials are a part of the text, the children use dittoed forms which I have prepared. On one form they may list the words they have located and identified in their scanning; and they, too, have a second column to fill in with possible meanings or explanations. The second dittoed form is lined for their use in writing questions for the boxes. Each reading group is furnished with a set of three boxes when we have reached the point of working in reading groups. The last four lines have the words WHY at the beginning of two of the lines, and the words HOW DID printed at the beginning of the remaining lines. I also furnish a broken line between question areas for easy cutting. It is in Lesson Two, Session 1 (Recitation) that the teacher's innovations may be easily used. Though the children seem never to tire of their own question boxes, we do use other methods. Sometimes we draw stick-figure pictures on the board and let the class try to figure out which sentence or paragraph is being illustrated. We keep a stack of 4½" x 6" manila paper handy (a 12" x 18" piece cut into 8 equal parts), and the children may draw their stick-figure illustrations on these and put them on the reading bulletin board. Class members may copy the correct lines from the context of their current reading materials and post their answers under the proper illustration--the one they have been able to READ. We write words or phrases from current materials onto cards, and drop them into an oatmeal box. When we have a few minutes, we draw out a card and tell as much as we can tell about the entry. We incorporate

our new vocabulary words into our penmanship lessons...the possibilities are endless.

When the children are working individually on this sequential procedure, they are encouraged to use dictionaries, thesauri, glossaries, or whatever is at their disposal to discover meanings. They even use each other as I frequently allow them to work in pairs.

I give them the same dittoed work forms to use in areas other than formal reading. They use the same format quite regularly in social studies. Amazingly enough, it always seems to surprise them that they are READING in social studies.

On the same bulletin board that we use for stick-figure illustrations we may also put new vocabulary words or the results of any ideas that seem fruitful and have aided comprehension. Posted on this bulletin board are these tag board reminders:

Scan and underline
Decide meanings
Paraphrase
Silent study
Games
What's my grade?

We use all kinds of materials from many companies. You will find that there isn't enough time to try all of the items that look like fun. I have listed below some of the materials that we enjoy.

If I may give you one last suggestion, don't glance at that clock one day. Try this procedure when you have an uninterrupted morning and just wade in. The recess bell will ring before you and the children realize what time it is. They might even ask you if they may stay in that day and work. They really might!

Some sources of materials to be used

1. Richard A. Boning. Specific Skill Series. Baldwin, N. Y.: Barnell Loft, Ltd. 1973. (Note: Detecting the Sequence, Getting the Facts, Following Directions, Locating the Answer, Using the Context.

2. Ellen Walpole (adapted by Sally M. Jarvis). Reading for Comprehension, Grade 4. Wilkinsburg, PA: Hayes School Publishing Co., 1972. (Spirit Masters 1-16)

3. Ethel S. Maney and Margaret H. Smith. Crossword Puzzles for Reading-Thinking Skills, Grade 4. Elizabethtown, PA: The Continental Press, Inc., 1967. (Spirit Masters)

Reading Comprehension: Instruction for the Gifted

by

Russell E. Burgett
University of Wisconsin-Platteville

The improvement of educational opportunities for more able children in our schools has captured the attention and imagination of the public once more. The general concern seems to focus upon what the instructional staff, and more specifically, the reading teacher can do to provide education commensurate with the abilities and needs of the gifted.

Although individual needs may not differ from those of the average learner; the abilities of the gifted do differ. Knight (1974) has listed the following characteristics of the gifted:

1. mental superiority
2. usually better than average achievement
3. thirst for knowledge
4. ability to conceptualize and generalize beyond years
5. excellent memory and intuitive reasoning
6. curiosity
7. may exhibit all or none of the characteristics associated with creativity
8. linguistically--talk early, may be reading before school entry, oral and written language above the average.

As teachers, we are being asked to provide instruction which utilizes and enhances these special characteristics of the gifted child in our particular

areas of specialization. Of special interest to elementary teachers of reading is the delineation of factors associated with language development, specifically reading, presented by Clark and Crane (1963) in their Gifted Child Program. They noted that the reading of the gifted, when compared to that of average learners, is superior in terms of:

1. ability in reasoning, generalizing, dealing with abstractions, comprehending meanings, thinking logically, and recognizing relationships
2. insight into problems
3. range of interests
4. speed and comprehension
5. critical judgment

If the aforementioned factors were categorized, they could be comfortably placed under the general heading of comprehension. Other programs for the gifted were described by Barbe and Renzulli (1971). They utilized a heavy reading emphasis and were designed to encourage comprehension in the form of divergent and evaluative thinking behavior (Barbe and Renzulli, 1975).

For the teacher of reading who is interested in promoting comprehension, some definite instructional directions begin to emerge based on the general characteristics of the gifted and an awareness of their special abilities related to reading. The instructional activities suggested for furthering reading comprehension at the elementry level may be similar to those described in Gallagher's (1975) Teaching the Gifted Child:

1. distinguish between a report and propaganda
2. problem solving--real or hypothetical situations
3. change story ending from the way the author ended it
4. discuss what would happen if a story character made a different choice
5. study myths, folk tales, and fables used in the study of historical, cultural, and geographic similarities and differences among people
6. use biographies as information about people, their motives, values, and accomplishments
7. word association activities

8. crossword puzzles
9. list several alternative actions that a story character could take
10. evaluative responses to a story or a play which requires the establishment of some value continuum and then to weigh various alternative actions against their values

Many of the previous suggestions are like those commonly found in basal readers under the general heading of COMPREHENSION--Interpretation and Evaluation. Martha King (1967) has broken the latter two subcategories down. Consequently, her descriptors may facilitate the reading teacher's identification of appropriate activities in supplementary and textbook materials:

1. Interpretation--inadequate background, implications, conclusions, generalizations, comparisons/contrasts, assumptions, relationships, anticipation of events, prediction of outcomes, character motives
2. Evaluation--accuracy of material, validity, authenticity, authoritativeness, completeness, truthfulness, fact/opinion, propaganda, slant, bias, purpose, mood.

In summary, this discussion has presented the general characteristics of gifted children and a delineation of their reading abilities related to comprehension. By using the suggested activities and the descriptors provided, the reading teacher at elementary level may be able to further the development of reading comprehension commensurate with the abilities of the more able children in our schools.

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NAMES in the NEWS

"The most positive men are the most credulous..." said Jonathan Swift.

In the prosperous Fox River Valley area of Wisconsin there is a small town called Kaukauna. Phyllis Foxgrover, reading specialist for the Kaukauna Area School District, has long been active in various reading improvement programs. Last spring Mrs. Foxgrover was the principal author of the Kaukauna Reading Improvement Project (KRIP) which was submitted to the Right to Read Agency of the U.S. Office of Education for funding. Of the 587 proposals submitted from around the country, the Kaukauna Project ranked second and received a grant of $67,899 for the first year.

KRIP is based on two assumptions: 1) if professional and para-professional staff members increase in skills and positive attitudes and 2) if a balanced reading program utilizing diagnostic approaches is provided, then the result will be measureable student growth. According to William Trarbach, project coordinator, KRIP is attempting to improve the reading achievement of all Kaukauna elementary students "through the improvement and refinement of student and teacher attitudes toward learning and reading comprehension."

The CLOZE Procedure

by

Lillian Heaney
Project READ Teacher, 1974-77
Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

Definition and Rationale

The CLOZE technique was developed by Wilson Taylor in 1953 and is based on the psychological theory of closure. Taylor's definition of CLOZE is "a method of intercepting a message from a TRANSMITTER (writer or speaker), mutilating its language patterns by deleting parts, and so administering it to RECEIVERS (readers and listeners) that their attempts to make the patterns whole again potentially yield a considerable number of CLOZE units."

From a psychological point of view, the CLOZE procedure has been considered highly motivating because of the human tendency to complete a familiar, but not-quite-finished-pattern--to "see" a broken circle as a whole one, for example, by mentally closing the gaps. This same principle applies to language. The CLOZE has to be filled with words in order to render a total language context which satisfies the reader's search for meaning.

CLOZE is an automatic word deletion process whereby words are removed from a printed passage. The pupil's task is to predict the exact word that was removed and replace it. In making his word predictions, the pupil depends upon prior knowledge, general understanding of material, context clues, and a knowledge of word usage. Several other aspects of language usage can also be involved (Culhane). The CLOZE taps the comprehension processes at two points by testing how much knowledge was obtained from the text surrounding the blank and how well information obtained from the text was employed to obtain additional information.

Constructing a Cloze Exercise

A teacher can construct a CLOZE exercise from any basal reader, trade book, or content textbook at either the elementary or secondary level. A fifty-item test, according to Taylor (1953), is large enough to permit easy words and hard words to cancel out. He further observed that the deletion of every fifth word was a sufficient separation.

Choose the instructional materials (textbooks) which you expect students to be able to read with understanding. Select a passage of 250 or more words. Contractions, hyphenated words, dates, and numbers are counted as one word. Type the passage on a ditto (double-spacing) and duplicate it so that each student has a copy of his own. To provide orientation to the passage, first and last sentences will remain intact. Begin deletions with the fifth word in the second sentence. Space lines at the places of deletion must be of uniform length so as not to serve as cues to the reader.

Administering and Scoring

When using CLOZE to determine readability of materials, the student is not permitted to read the passage before doing the CLOZE. The CLOZE test is usually given to a group of students. However, it can also be used for individual testing. Give the student all the time he needs to complete the exercise.

Scoring is done on the basis of exact replacement of the deleted word. Spelling will not count against the student's score as long as he has enough letters or phonetic elements to let the teacher know what the word is. Usage errors are counted as incorrect.

For CLOZE testing to be useful, the classroom teacher needs some criterion for converting CLOZE scores to equivalent reading levels of comprehension. As a rule of thumb, the following criteria may be used with confidence:

57% of CLOZE units correct -- Independent Level
44% to 56% -- Instructional Level
Below 44% -- Frustration Level

A more refined method of converting scores follows: 1) divide the number of correct responses by the total number of deletions in the test, 2) multiply this figure by 1.67 to convert to standard comprehension scores. For example if there are twenty deletions in the entire passage and eleven correct responses, then 11 20 = .55 and .55 x 1.67 = .9185 or 92%.

In using CLOZE for matching students with materials, the teacher will not rely on a single score. Use of five or six representative passages from a given text ought to establish a basis for grouping and placing pupils in appropriate instructional materials. It should be noted here, that students learn more when they are dealing with materials at the level of 80% to 90% comprehension.

Applications of CLOZE Procedure

(1) As a measure of READABILITY.

The CLOZE procedure is a quick, efficient, and accurate method for determining a student's placement. The test approximates the actual reading task the student is expected to perform, and for this reason is more realistic and functional than would be a readability formula-standardized-test-result approach.

Studies comparing the traditional comprehension tests with CLOZE show CLOZE to be 92% reliable as compared with traditional tests which are 71% reliable. The fundamental fallacy in using readability formulas is that tese "checks" fail to consider the following important factors involved in passage comprehension: a) the impact of simple structure words on understanding the interrelationship of ideas, b) multiple meanings of simple key vocabulary terms as attributes of a concept, c) idea density (abstractions expressed in simple words), and d) the specialized patterns of writing inherent to a discipline. On the other hand, numerous technical terms found in a text passage tend to inflate the readability score, while, in fact, a fifth grade student normally has no problem with such vocabulary as "troposphere, stratosphere, ionosphere, and exosphere". Such words are striking in their general configuration and structure and readily understandable because of graphic illustrations which ordinarily accompany the science text.

(2) As an INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY.

CLOZE has proven to be extremely effective in improving general reading comprehension. This statement is substantiated by observing student growth among participants in Project READ (CESA #13, Waupun, WI) during September, 1974 to May, 1977. The comparison of growth with normal expectancy shows these results as measured by standardized reading testing:

Project READ
October, 1976 - May, 1977

Grade	Expectancy	Growth
4	7	14.5
5	7	16.00
6	7	8.72
7	7	16.27

A major goal of Project READ was to narrow the gap that exists between reading potential and actual reading performance. An example of success at this point is shown by a profile of gains made by 25 Project READ students at fifth grade level during the school year 1975-1976. Reading performance of this population showed a range of 2.4 - 8.7 at the beginning of the year. About 68% were reading below their determined expectancy. After seven months the most retarded reader in the program achieved a comprehension score of 4.4, while the most advanced reader reached 11.9. At this time only 32% of this student-group had not reached their level of reading expectancy.

While use of CLOZE was not the only strategy used, it was indeed a major factor. For use as an instructional tool, CLOZE was modified in these ways: a) students first read assigned passages from the text, b) they completed a CLOZE constructed from within the reading passage, c) synonyms were accepted, and d) the number of deletions was 30 or 40. When using CLOZE as a teaching technique it is permissible to use as few as 20 deletions, depending on the grade level of the group.

The section chosen for assigned reading was preferably a part which presented a central idea or required a specific reading/thinking skill. For the first two exercises, the exact word was demanded in

order to cause students to attend very carefully to their reading. In later exercises, synonyms were accepted if they did not change the meaning or necessary precision of the text.

Student progress was recorded individually by using a bar graph which indicated levels of comprehension on the vertical axis. Use of the graph proved to be unusually motivating to the child as he began to see the upward trend in his understanding. This upward trend occurs naturally as the child becomes more efficient in his responses to the patterns of language intrinsic to the discipline. He begins to "get the feel" of the subject matter. Therefore, it is advisable to continue CLOZE in one subject area for a period of ten weeks with two exercises per week considered optimally effective.

Follow-up discussions are critical to the effectiveness of CLOZE as an instructional strategy. "One of the reasons CLOZE has not fared too well as a teaching technique in past research might be that investigators have frequently relied on the technique itself to do the teaching" (Jongsma) Follow-up discussion focuses on the redundancy of language, position of words in sentences, synonyms which do or do not change meaning (semantics), correct usage, important details and references in the content itself, and the impact of signal words as cues to thinking patterns (structural comprehension). "The teacher should lead students to understand that activities utilizing CLOZE passages involve strategies that will be of value to them in their independent reading." (Bortnick)

(3) Other uses of CLOZE.

Research has established that deletion of nouns and verbs from a text does measure knowledge of content. For this reason, it seems that CLOZE could be used as an evaluation of content mastery. When used for this purpose, the deletion process will not be automatic. Rather, the teacher will delete those nouns and verbs which he considers to be substantive to the subject matter. At this time no validating research has been done on this application of the CLOZE technique.

Little has been written on CLOZE as an instructional tool, but the imaginative teacher might find

ways to use the technique in these areas of language instruction: a) basic sentence patterns (NV, NLVN, NVNN, etc.), b) expanding sentence bases with adjective and adverb modifiers, and c) relational words such as prepositions, conjunctions, relative pronouns, and relative adverbs. "Perhaps the greatest contribution the CLOZE procedure could make in future research is in the study of the structure of language and its influence on reading.... The results of such a study could have important implications for the teaching of reading and language." (Jongsma)

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Teaching Language Clues to Reading Comprehension

by

John W. Miller
Wichita State University
Wichita, Kansas

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Reading Comprehension is an illusive entity. It is difficult to define, measure and teach. Researchers attempting to construct a theoretical model of the comprehension process for empirical examination are often confronted with a maze of confusing studies. The untangled maze is perhaps more discouraging. Confusion generally gives way to contradiction. Measurement problems are also prevalent in the area of comprehension. Naturally, any quality which is difficult to isolate and describe is equally difficult to measure. Finally, teachers must face the ominous responsibility of helping students obtain a quality which is vaguely defined and measured. It is the most difficult of these dilemmas with which this discussion deals: teaching students to gain meaning from the printed page.

The teacher of reading often becomes a teacher of decoding skills. The notions of phonics, structural analysis and dictionary skills are more precise and comfortable than the notion of teaching students to "think." A consonant blend or a compound word has a greater reality than does inferential or critical thinking. It would seem that it is far easier to teach something that can be underlined, printed, cutout of a magazine, or put on a cassette, than

something which is more abstract. In short, word recognition has been treated as a more tangible commodity than comprehension. It is more readily definable, measurable and teachable. However, comprehension is far closer to the ultimate goal of mature reading than is single word decoding.

The primary purpose of this article is to propose a different teaching viewpoint on comprehension, one which removes some of the abstraction. The final product is a teaching sequence for comprehension skills that is parallel in form to the teaching sequences commonly used for word recognition.

What is Comprehension?

If teachers are to aid students in acquiring a set of behaviors or thought processes, it is helpful to be able to identify, isolate, and define the desired process and product. Teachers developing strategies for teaching comprehension may turn to the "experts" for definitional advice. They may also find little tangible help.

Comprehension is sometimes defined from a teaching point of view as a hierarchy or taxonomy of skills (Spache, 1961; Cleland, 1965; Barret, 1968). Unfortunately, while a taxonomy appears to add authenticity to a teaching scheme the authenticity may be more implied than real. In other words one author may identify and sequence five comprehension skills while another may identify and sequence five hundred. These appear to be different ways to slice the same ill-defined pie.

Another way the teacher may try to add reality to the definitional problem in teaching comprehension is by examining background research. Factory analytic techniques have been a common methodology for examining comprehension. (Davis, 1968; Homes and Singer, 1966; Vernon, 1962; Spearri, 1972.) These studies, when collectively examined, tend to support a three-factor definition of reading comprehension previously cited by Spache (1962). The three basic factors include:

1. Word Meanings
2. Idea Relationships
3. Reasoning

Unfortunately this approach does not establish what mental skills are to be taught to improve comprehension.

No definition of comprehension is an absolute. Teachers will not find an answer that is global as well as explicit. Knowledgeable and informed teachers must turn within for answers rather than searching for absolutes. The definition of comprehension must be one that the individual teacher believes in and can teach from with confidence. In short, a teacher who has taught about comprehension and arrived at a working conceptualization, will be more effective with his or her students than will the teacher who blindly accepts a sequence prepared by an "expert" without fully understanding the conceptualization.

How is Comprehension Presently Taught?

In examining the ways that comprehension is taught the teacher need not be exceptionally observant to note that one approach prevails. That is, teaching comprehension through the use of questioning techniques. Further, these questions which are generated often require only literal recall and recognition ability (Guszak, 1967). Questioning as a method of teaching is a very workable technique for some children in some situations, but it is heavily dependent on one major premise: the desired information must reside within the learner. The question may serve to help the learner organize or reorganize his or her thought processes, that (s)he must "contain" the desired response. In effect the questioning technique is often used to teach the learner what (s)he already knows. However, what happens when the learner does not contain the information? What happens when the skillfully designed inferential question falls flat because the learner has not made the inference?

At this point teachers of comprehension must have a working conceptualization of the comprehension process they are trying to teach, and this process must have some concrete reality directly observable for both the teacher and the student. It is felt that this reality is present in the form of language clues in the reading material that is to be comprehended. The teaching of comprehension can focus on the development of a reader who is searching for meaning, armed with a specific set of strategies. The use of these strategies can be triggered by the occurrence of certain observable language clues.

At this point an example may serve to clarify the focus of the presentation. Read the following story:

> Jimmy ran home from school as fast as he could go. Today was the day of the big baseball game between the B Street Bombers and the Park Hill Nine. He raced into the house and grabbed his baseball glove. As he started to run out the door his mother caught him and said, "If you do your home work, then you can play baseball." Jimmy knew he didn't have time to do his home work and get to the game on time.
>
> Later in the afternoon as Jimmy hit his second homerun he wondered what would happen when he returned home.

Inferrential comprehension may be dealt with superficially in this story through asking the question, "Did Jimmy take out the garbage?" This alone may be enough to "teach" many children about inference. However, another approach, one dealing with thought processes and language clues, may be more appropriate.

Many basic inferences are made using a structure known as an If..., then...clause. Children may first be introduced to the logical sequence of simple if..., then...implication. Then they can be made aware of the key words (If..., then...). Armed with this strategy the child could read the passage looking for the language clue to trigger his thinking process.

The Teacher's Thought Process In Developing a Strategy

For the purpose of conceptualization, comprehension will be defined here as four levels of thinking: literal, inferential, critical, and creative. There are no more absolutes in this definition than were cited in the previous definitional approaches, but the teacher must begin somewhere. LITERAL comprehension entails reading to recognize or recall information which is explicitly stated. INFERENTIAL comprehension entails taking literal level understandings and combining them to make interpretations beyond what is explicitly stated. CRITICAL comprehension entails the combination of literal and inferential thinking to make more subjective judgments.

CREATIVE comprehension entails using thinking at all three previous levels to evoke emotional or affective responses.

This four-level breakdown is utilized to provide a common basis for conceptualization. If this format presents difficulty, view the breakdown as fluid and add or subtract levels as needed. The important requirement in teaching comprehension is that the teacher conceptualizes the process in comfortable and understandable manner.

Given the four levels of comprehension a framework needs to be established for the searching out of language clues. A simple analogy may help to clarify this need. If children are searching for San Diego on a map, they might use a world map, a United States map, a California map, or a southern California map. The best strategy might be to use the southern California map first, and after locating San Diego to use increasingly larger maps to gain relative perspective. In the same way children searching for a specific language clue might begin their search with single words and then expand to sentences, paragraphs, stories, and finally, synthesize their thoughts through multiple stories.

For example, large meaning changes can emanate from single words. Consider three sentences:

President Carter confronted the group.
President Carter confronted the throng.
President Carter confronted the mob.

Three single words, group-throng-mob, seriously change the meaning of the sentence.

Meaning can also be gained from sentences. The if..., then..., example previously cited demonstrates inferential thinking within a sentence. These same concepts can also be extended beyond words and sentences to paragraphs and story passages.

The multiple story level is often neglected in the teaching of comprehension. In asking children children to comprehend, teachers are often asking them to analyze or break down thoughts. It should not be forgotten that children need to be taught to see relationships across different stories and they need to be given a logical strategy for comparison and contrast synthesis.

The two variables presented, levels of comprehension and length of passages at which comprehension may operate, can be organized to form a matrix.

Figure One: A conceptualization of comprehension

LENGTH OF PASSAGE	LEVELS OF THINKING			
	LITERAL	INFERENTIAL	CRITICAL	CREATIVE
WORD	1.1	2.1	3.1	4.1
SENTENCE	1.2	2.2	3.2	4.2
PARAGRAPH OR STORY	1.3	2.3	3.3	4.3
MULTIPLE STORY	1.4	2.4	3.4	4.4

In examining this matrix it should be noted that sixteen cells have been constructed. Four different levels of comprehension are represented and each of these levels divided by the length of passage which is used as the framework to organize the search for language clues. There is nothing absolute about this conceptualization, but it does have utility for the teacher.

What are the Language Clues?

It is impossible for any one person to fully establish all the clues that relate to any given cell in the matrix. The insightful teacher will constantly be adding strategies and clues to the framework. The following brief examination of specific language clues will be undertaken mindful of three factors:

1. The matrix is a skeleton outline to structure teacher thinking. The insightful teacher must add workable ideas at the applied level.
2. Most clues can be traced back to the single word or sentence level. Organization of these specific clues is what takes place at longer passage levels.

3. Inferential comprehension builds from literal, critical from literal and inferential, etc., in a hierarchical fashion.

For these reasons the discussion of specific language clues will center on four cells: literal comprehension of single words (1.1) sentences (1.2) inferential comprehension of single words (2.1) and sentences (2.2).

1.1 LITERAL COMPREHENSION OF SINGLE WORDS. Single words are the most obvious and apparent components of a written message. The reader should learn that certain thought processes are keyed with individual words. After the concepts have been presented at a concrete level the reader should be apprised of the key or clue words that indicate the process. For example, recognition and recall of a time sequence is an area that receives considerable attention under the area of literal comprehension. After readers have been assessed as needing development in this area, they begin to work on a concrete activity such as sequencing picture frames from a comic strip which have been cut apart. This is typically done to establish a concrete or low abstraction level understanding of time relationships.

Another concrete level activity to develop temporal ordering is enacting a story with figures on a story board or with puppets and then re-enacting the story. The creative teacher can find numerous ways to develop thought processes at the concrete level. As the child's ability to "think about" temporal order is developed the teacher should begin introducing the words that are the language clues to sequencing. In this instance the key words might be BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER if the objective was of a low difficulty; or the key words might be SUBSEQUENTLY and RETROSPECTIVELY at a higher difficulty level. Either way, the teaching strategy is to prepare the reader with some concrete clues for the search for meaning.

A brief example of two more types of single words that are clues to literal comprehension are appositives and pronoun referents. Words that are used in conjunction with appositive structures may help the student in recalling significant details. Appositives are an easily recognizable clue to single word meanings and usually appear with identifying punctuation, e.g., John, my brother....

Sequence words, pronoun referents, and appositives are three examples of language clues to single word comprehension at the literal level of thinking. They relate directly to the skills of recognizing and recalling sequence and recognizing significant details.

1.2 LITERAL COMPREHENSION OF SENTENCES. Within the framework of the sentence most of the grammatical restrictions of the English language operate. In sentence length passages children can bring to bear their oral language knowledge on the comprehension task. The most obvious language clues to literal comprehension here are word order and punctuation. For example, consider the following three sentences:

Tony played first base!
Tony played first base.
Tony played first base?

The simple punctuation differences change the entire literal topic or main idea of these sentences.

Additionally, the relationship between literal comprehension of significant details and main ideas may often be uncovered in subordinate clauses. Consider the following sentences:

While the refinery exploded, the freighters waited at the dock.
While the freighters waited at the dock, the refinery exploded.

The shift in word order from main to subordinate clause indicates a similar shift of the pieces of information from main ideas to significant details. Children need to be familiarized with subordinate conjunctions as language clues to this process. Teaching children to carefully dig through sentences for important punctuation and word order language clues can help them to develop strategies for recalling the main idea or recalling significant details.

2.1 INFERENTIAL COMPREHENSION OF WORDS. Inferential thinking is a series of thought processes or operations. These processes are cued by certain specific words. Some of the thought processes of inference involve classification. Piaget (1957) has described some of the logical strategies involved as negation, conjunction and disjunction. Negation is signaled by clue words such as NOT, NOR, and NEITHER;

conjunction by AND, ALSO, and BOTH; and disjunction by OR, EITHER, and NOT BOTH. Consider the following sentence:

and
Jim or Bill pulled the bank robbery.
not

Obviously precise use of the clue words is all important in gaining the meaning of this passage. These basic operations are the core of inferential understanding. They relate directly to using class inclusive and exclusive inference. Children need to be made aware of the precise meanings of these words, and they need to search them out in their reading.

Another example of single word clues to inferential thinking is the if..., then...structure. This example has been previously cited, but also needs consideration here as it expands well into the sentence length passage. The words if and then are the clues to trigger the thought process of implication but they gain full meaning in complete sentence expansion.

2.2 INFERENTIAL COMPREHENSION OF SENTENCES. Determining fact from fiction is a comprehension skill that is often considered under the heading of inference. Once again there are certain clues in the written message that can help children to trigger their inferential thinking. One common clue is that fantasy, legend, fairy tales, etc. often include many context violations between the subject nouns and main verbs. Consider these sentences:

The wolf said "I'll huff and I'll puff ..."
(wolf/said)
The dish ran away with the spoon (dish/ran)
...along came a spider and sat down beside her and said... (spider/said)
Stuart Little drove his car onto...
(mouse/drove)

Each sentence is from a fictional piece. The subject of the sentence is doing something that in reality can not be done by the subject. Children need to be made aware of the restrictions between nouns and verbs and to look for violations of these restrictions as concrete clues that a story is fictionalized.

Other examples of logical relationships such as class inclusion and exclusion are often clued at the sequence level. Materials such as attribute blocks,

people pieces, and color cubes published by Webster Divisions of McGraw Hill are excellent concrete teaching materials for developing inferential thinking.

Implementing the Concepts Presented as a Teaching Style

To this point the discussion has been centered on the teacher's conceptualization of comprehension process, and on identifying some potential language clues. It is now necessary to set up an actual sequence of teaching that can be implemented. This sequence is designed to point up relationships in the teaching of word recognition skills to the teaching of thought processes or comprehension.

1. Introduce the Concept or Thought Process at a Concrete Level. The initial consonant B may be taught as sound at the beginning of words like those that can be shown in pictures, (ball, baby) or those that can be cut out of a mail-order catalogue (bicycle, baseball), or things that can be brought from home (banana, bow). Likewise, many comprehension processes can be demonstrated at concrete level. Attribute games and problems are one form of materials that science and math teachers often use to develop thinking skills. These materials are readily adaptable to any content area. The important point is to remember to help the child learn to think not merely to answer questions.

2. Introduce the Language Clues that are Signals for the Thought Process the Student is Trying to Develop. If children were being taught to syllabicate between identical consonants appearing side by side in a word, they would undoubtedly be presented with a number of words conforming to the generalization applied. In the same way, children learning to differentiate appropriate and inappropriate if..., then...implications need to be made fully aware that they are reading to find a sentence in which the IF and THEN both appear. These are their language clues to trigger the process they have been developing in step one.

3. Provide Practice with the Process in Limited Context. If the child had been introduced to the hard sound of C, it would be wise to provide reading selections including words such as CAKE, CAP, CANDLE,

COME and CUP. The wise teacher would not follow the lesson with a selection including the words CITY, CENTER, CELL, and CEILING. Therefore, after introducing if..., then...implication at the concrete level and carefully introducing the clue words, the teacher should find or write short selections which conform directly to the generalizations. After the child has had practice in using the cues, slight irregularities may be introduced such as a sentence with a stated IF and an understood THEN.

4. Provide Extended Practice with the Process in Context Where The Cues Are Not Present. If the student has been taught to use context and the regular "ed" past tense marker as a word recognition aid it is hoped that some of this learning will transfer to decoding of irregular verbs which do not use the "ed" marker (eg. ran). Likewise once a comprehension process has been learned at the concrete level and the reader has ample practice in triggering the process through appearance of the language clues, it is hoped that the thought processes will continue to function in the absence of the literal level clues.

Summary

A conceptual framework of reading comprehension including two variables, level of comprehension and length of passage has been presented. Four of the sixteen cells formed in this framework have been briefly explored to determine examples of specific language clues. Such traditional comprehension skills as finding the main idea, recalling significant details, detecting fact from fiction, drawing inferences, and recalling sequence of events have been fit into this framework. Further, some specific language clues have been cited as signals to each one of these thought processes. Finally, a four-step teaching sequence was introduced. The steps were:

1. Introduce the thought process at a concrete level.
2. Introduce the language clues that are signals of the process.
3. Provide practice in limited context.
4. Provide extended practice in a context where the cues are not present.

It has not been the contention that this article is a complete methodology for teaching reading

comprehension. It is hoped that the information presented will provide a conceptualization and a few sample strategies to which the innovative teacher can move from the questioning technique toward teaching children to think.

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Improving Reading Comprehension In the Intermediate Grades

by

Lucille Carstensen
Sunnyside Elementary School
Kenosha, Wisconsin

Reading comprehension has come under intense scrutiny in recent years, with the result that renewed emphasis has been placed on the importance of the sentence as a basic meaning-bearing unit within English.

Sentence difficulty is influenced by varying of word structure, sentence structure, vocabulary load, and the content, or concept load among other things. Often the materials for those pupils reading below grade level are rewritten with lower vocabulary loads and less complex structured sentences. This frequently results in a change of concept formation.

Instead of placing the major emphasis on rewriting materials for students, perhaps it would be more advantageous to begin placing more emphasis on teaching students how to deal with more complex sentence structures. With this in mind, the literature was examined to find a rationale and to develop a means of implementing the teaching of sentence comprehension by using various strategies to make pupils cognizant of various sentence structures and resulting change in meaning. The focus was on developing comprehension of sentence structure in the intermediate grades in a lower socio-economic area with mixed racial and language school population. The mechanics of punctuation were not considered part of the study.

The term syntactic structures, as used in the paper, refers to those devices or patterns within

the language according to which words are combined into larger structures for the expression of meaning in sentences.

Review of Literature

The literature was perused with several questions in mind. Do children have a complete knowledge and control of syntactic structures when they enter school? Do some cultural groups in our society have more difficulty in understanding certain sentence structures? Is listening to language an adequate means of developing understanding of language structure? What are some of the approaches that look promising in the developing of this skill?

Chomsky (1971) found the acquisition of syntactic structures in some children was surprisingly late; many syntactic skills are still evolving through the tenth and eleventh years of age. There was considerable variation of rate in acquisition in different children with a common order of acquisition. She found differences in command of syntactic structures were revealed most readily by oral comprehension tests involving selected constructions of a relatively complex nature.

Marcus (1971) discovered complex sentences in which a relative clause interrupted the subject-verb-object sequence of the independent clause were more difficult for intermediate students to understand than complex sentences whose basic components were not separated. Some students did not understand the semantic and/or the syntactic meaning of various function words, including simple and compound prepositions, correlatives, and relative pronouns.

Goodman and Greene's (1977) analysis of children's reading miscues showed similar information. They found readers had difficulty with complex relationships between clauses as a result of dependencies caused by insubordination, imbeddings, or complementation of various kinds. Many did not know how conjunctions changed meanings.

The Spanish-American children in an English as a second language program frequently encounter difficulty with sentence comprehension because of the variation in syntactic structure between their native language and the acquired language. Other

factors, of course, affect their comprehension, but those are not of concern in this paper.

Usually the child with black dialect uses less complex syntax and is less able to understand complex sentences than other children of native English language (Laffey, 1973). In a discussion of the effect of black dialect on a child's reading, it has been stated that the child will be unable to attach semantic sense to certain structures until he is able to handle the syntactic relationships involved. The child should be taught these new structures so he can add these structural patterns to those he already controls. This can be done best by accepting the child's dialect in oral expression while teaching him to see and hear language patterns we would like him to know and eventually use.

Listening to spoken language can aid some children in acquisition of knowledge of more sophisticated syntax, but it is not sufficient by itself. Book language and spoken language are different in complexity. Language used in children's television programs contains only thirty-four percent of the sentence structures considered complex, whereas the language of trade books used for reading to children contains sixty-six percent of such sentences. It would appear that children who have stories read to them would be more likely to develop the ability to handle the more complex sentence structures than those children who are exposed to a heavy diet of television viewing of children's programs (Doake, 1976).

One may conclude then that students whose language development has been progressing slowly may experience more difficulty in reading unless more provisions are made to compensate.

Black (1968) has suggested an inductive approach to language structure for disadvantaged children. Hansell (1976) concurred. Listening to language is not sufficient; children need to rewrite statements to fit models--to manipulate language. Writing of sentences should lead to structuring of paragraphs and eventually, with aid, transfer into reading situations.

Teaching has been based too long on the assumption that transfer of learning takes place auto-

matically. Teaching must be done in such a way that interrelationships of language are understood and transfer is directed (Robinson, 1971).

Goodman and Greene (1977) agreed that children need to explore rewriting sentences so that they can continue to see the various options authors have in writing and realize that readers have similar options. They do add a note of caution. If the teacher wishes to introduce unfamiliar or unpredictable grammatical structure, the content of the material should be very familiar to the students. They believe that pupils should be encouraged to use at least the following four reading strategies as they participate in the reading act:

1. Concentrate on the meaning of words and phrases in relationship to the other language cues in the surrounding language environment.

2. Rearrange or transform sentences into language with which they are more familiar in order to understand.

3. Use a blank for words or phrases which are unfamiliar but continue reading to gain sufficient context to decide what the author meant.

4. Use a synonym substitution which would retain the meaning of the written language, for words or phrases with which they are unfamiliar.

Francis (1958) identified the following four types of syntactic structure which he considers basic: a) structures of modification which consist of a head and a modifier, b) structures of predication which consist of a subject and a predicate, c) structures of complementation which consist of a verbal element and a complement, d) and structures of coordination which have two or more syntactically equivalent units joined in a structure which functions as a single unit. All syntactic structures in sentences are manifestations of one or more of these types. The signals of English syntactic structures in written material are word order, function words, inflections, and derivational contrast. The latter assumes that part of the comprehending process is

the derivation of meaning from patterns of syntactic structures which may appear as part of the sentence.

Klein (1977) has provided a how-to approach with examples of models and how children can rearrange sentence order or combine sentences in rewriting. The result, he claims is a more sophisticated syntax in children's writing which can be directed and guided so that it is applied to the reading situation.

Pupils can be given direct instruction in building a specific type of sentence structure and how to manipulate the word order to change the meaning. After sentences have been built, students can be given sentences of a similar structure to analyze into their basic kernel sentences again. It is hoped that the teaching of semantics of syntactic structure of sentences can be guided in the writing and reading areas so that children develop strategies they can use independently.

In summary, one notes that children do not acquire knowledge of syntactic structures at the same rate. Certain segments of our population have more difficulty than others and need instruction in discovering how language operates. Teaching the semantics of sentence structure can be approached through the writing mode of language. The sophistication gained through language manipulation in writing can be channeled so that pupils see relationships among the written, spoken, and printed language. The end result should be better understanding of what is read.

GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES AND SAMPLE SENTENCES RESULTING FROM SENTENCE COMBINING (Marcus, 1971, Francis, 1958)

I. Structure of Modification
   - A. Noun modifiers: The friendly boy helped me.
   - B. Prepositional phrase as noun, verb, or sentence modifier: Jack gave the ball on the table to the boy.
   - C. Complex sentence where relative clause modifies subject: The girl who is my friend baked the cake.
   - D. Complex sentence where relative clause modifies the object: The man frightened the dog which was hiding under the table.
   - E. Complex sentence where relative clause

modifies object of preposition: The father of the boys who were playing on the raft sailed the winning boat.

F. Complex sentence with two relative clauses: The dog which Sam brought gave the newspaper to the man whom he liked.

II. Structures of Predication
A. Passive voice in a simple sentence: He was given candy by the lady.
B. Passive voice in complex sentence where relative clause contains the passive: The man who was shot by the robber fell behind the counter.

III. Structures of Complementation
A. Indirect object/direct object sequence: Father brought Jim his puppy.
B. Direct object/objective complement sequence: The general made her brother captain.
C. Subjective complement embedded as modifer: The boy outside owns the motorbike.

IV. Structures of Coordination
A. Sentence with coordination of phrases: Sam and Don ran and skipped along the path.
B. Sentence with coordination of subordinate clauses: The boy ran away because he heard the shot and because the robbers frightened him.
C. Compound sentence: He is not only truthful, but he is also loyal.
D. Elliptical structures of coordination: Mother asked Mrs. Hooker to come at eight and Mr. Dawes at noon.

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Editor's Note: Dr. M. Klein's monograph titled, Teaching sentence structure and sentence combining in the middle grades, is available from Wisconsin Dept. of Public Instruction. Ask for information about bulletin number 6340.

PARENTS: YOU ARE THE KEY TO READING

SUCCESS FOR YOUR CHILD
by
Lorraine Sordahl
Sister Julitta Fisch

The Milwaukee Area Reading Council has copies of three pamphlets written to help parents and teachers identify the reading readiness and reading growth of a child. Each pamphlet contains practical suggestions which can be used by parents who are interested in promoting reading at home. You may purchase a set of these pamphlets for $1.25 plus 50¢ for postage and handling. Send your check payable to Milwaukee Area Reading Council to:

M.A.R.C. President
P.O. Box 1108
Milwaukee, WI 53201

READ A BOOK IN AN HOUR

by

Cyrus F. Smith, Jr.
Reading Center
UW-Milwaukee

Teachers in secondary schools are constantly seeking ways to introduce their students to literature. In the past, teachers have resorted to practices which range from reading the spiciest parts of novels (in an attempt to arouse interest) to thrusting books into students' hands (demanding that they read them). It is quite obvious that techniques such as these vary in their success.

I would like to discuss an alternative in-class teaching strategy for acquainting students with literature. This technique is entitled "Read a Book in an Hour." It was first introduced to me by Professor John Childrey, a member of the reading faculty at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton. The author acknowledges Professor Childrey's contribution and his permission to discuss this strategy. For purposes of clarity, this article will consist of four parts: (1) will examine the procedure; (2) will scrutinize the teacher's role; (3) will discuss both the strengths and limitations of the practice; and (4) will list some sources of titles which are appropriate in the development of this idea.

Procedure

At first glance, the format of this technique will appear to be most obvious. The procedure is simplistic in that the reading task, which may consist of anywhere from one hundred to several hundred pages, is parcelled out. This is accomplished by literally ripping a book apart. (If a paperback is

used, it may be necessary to reinforce the segmented chapters with staples or cloth tape.) The teacher then distributes the chapters so that each student has one. (With shorter books, it may be necessary to divide into groups or to tear up two copies rather than one.) The teacher's judgment is important when he distributes the chapters. One goal of "read a book in an hour" is to have all the students finish reading at about the same time. Less able readers, then, are given shorter chapters and more proficient readers are given longer ones. The students are informed that they are to read their chapter silently and that they are to report on it rather than read it aloud to their classmates. Further, the students are told that some of them may have a chapter where the characters are not named, or where situations have arisen that need to be clarified. Therefore, they have to rely on their classmates to fill in these gaps and vice versa. The importance of their responsibilities to the group are now emphasized, and students know that they have to depend on one another to find out what actually happened. For this purpose, it may be beneficial to have students take notes while they read. The notes, however, should be restricted to a maximum of one-half page. Again, the emphasis should be on recounting remembrances and not rote retelling.

In short, the teacher, having first read the book, divides it into its component chapters and gives one chapter to each student. Each student is then given a small portion of the total task and is directed to report his findings to the group.

Students now begin to read silently. Once the segmented reading tasks are completed, each youngster contributes the information that he has gleaned from the reading. The youngsters are reminded not to reread the chapters to the class but simply to summarize perceptions and understandings which they retained. They may refer to the notes which they took if they desire.

Teacher's Role

The teacher's function within this process is most important. Its success or failure is his responsibility. If he has not previously read the material so that he can guide the students' retelling and subsequent reactions, the technique can degenerate

into little more than chaos. Further, the teacher acts as a catalyst in that he must maintain the level of interest in the story.

The teacher now selects two chapters (one near the middle and one near the end) and asks for a recounting of these as a prelude to a sequential plot development. By carefully selecting these chapters, the teacher not only creates interest but also builds suspense. Therefore, the teacher should choose one where the characters' names are not mentioned, or one where they find themselves in a seemingly unsolvable predicament, or one where someone is about to experience a catastrophe. By proceeding in this fashion, students who are reading in the beginning of the novel get an inkling of some future conflicts. Students given the concluding chapters learn of selected yet significant events which lead to the solution. Likewise, the retelling of a concluding chapter gives the listeners a limited amount of interesting information.

It is most important that the teacher shapes these initial student contributions to reflect a recounting of events and not a rereading of the chapter. For example, this is the time to evoke reasonable time limits for student contributions. If the teacher allows the first student to ramble, subsequent students might follow this example. Again, the emphasis is on clarity not ambiguity.

The discussion then is brief yet comprehensive. At the end of each recounting, the contributor is urged to ask one or two questions of his classmates. This practice provides information not only to the speaker but also for some of the other students. The teacher then returns to a discussion of each chapter. He begins with the first and continues through the remaining ones.

The teacher's responsibility does not end here. It is his task to maintain some degree of continuity as the recounting unfolds. Therefore, he should write several major headings on the chalkboard for all to see and refer to. These headings might include: characters, conflicts, setting, significant events, and the like--elements which he feels are necessary for closure to take place. The teacher then adds appropriate information as it is uncovered. If a student has neglected an important element

within his assigned chapter, the teacher needs to ferret this out. Open-ended questions, designed to jar the student's memory, can be effective here. Thus, the teacher serves a number of roles, all of which depend on his thorough understanding of story development.

Discussion

"Read a book in an hour" has both strengths and limitations inherent in its usability. One strength is that students do not read to their peers but retell what has been read. In classrooms where oral reading is required, students' attention is frequently focused on a limited segment of the material. Typically, a student attempts to ascertain the portion of material that he will be required to read. Once this deduction has been made, he practices that passage so as not to embarras himself with unnecessary oral reading errors. Unfortunately, his attention is directed not to the passages being read to him but to the segment he anticipates having to read. He, therefore, misses some portion of the lesson. Following his oral reading ordeal, he is so relieved that his attention wanes from the reading of his classmates as he revels in the satisfaction that his trial is over. Therefore, many students attend to a minimal portion of the oral reading lesson. The technique being discussed does not require oral reading, but a recounting in the student's own words. This situation is much less threatening and most students recognize "read a book in an hour" as a pleasant experience.

A second strength is that the teacher has in effect given an extended book talk, one in which his students actively participate. Students experience a major portion of the story and some may choose to read the book in its entirety.

A third strength for this procedure is that the teacher can introduce a book in a relatively short period of time. The lesson of the day becomes a modified free reading session in which structure and interaction take place. Students, therefore, depend on one another for missing pieces of information and must contribute to the story development.

"Read a book in an hour" also has several limitations. Not all books lend themselves to this

technique. The teacher must select a book that has reasonably short, manageable chapters and a plot with a build-up of action followed by some sort of climax. The Cay by Theodore Taylor and A Teacup Full of Roses by Sharon Bell Mathis are two excellent examples. Books of this sort are far more appropriate than introspective novels such as A Summer To Die by Lois Lowry or Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack! by M. E. Kerr. A book such as The Learning Tree by Gordon Parks does not lend itself to this because of the length of each chapter. Other books may be inappropriate in that the teacher judges that the technique treats them superficially and, therefore, dismisses their importance or impact.

Summarization

"Read a book in an hour" is a manageable way to introduce a book to students in a relatively short period of time. Expense is minimal in that one or, at the most, two copies of the book are required. Teachers, therefore, might find it reasonable to invest $2 or $3 of their own money from time to time to expose youngsters to novels, biographies, historical fiction or the like. The material does not have to come exclusively from collections of so called "adolescent literature." Indeed, many books written for adults are most suitable. Content teachers might also consider this practice. Science teachers, for instance, might select a biography about a figure mentioned in their texts. Social studies teachers might find some works of historical fiction to be usable. Both could easily incorporate this technique into their teaching. In short, any teacher can supplement and complement his instruction by "reading a book in an hour."

Sources of Titles

It would be inappropriate to discuss "read a book in an hour" and then fail to provide sources of usable materials. The following is not a list of specific titles but rather booklists for high interest, low readability selections, booklists for special subjects, and booklists for current titles.

Booklists of High Interst/Low Readability Materials

A place to start. Robert Leibert. Lists thousands of titles appropriate to school subject areas, especially social studies. Annotation includes reading level, interest level, author and publisher. Reading Center, University of Missouri, 52nd and Holmes, Kansas City, Mo. 64110.

Childrens' books for $1.50 or less. Association for Childhood Education International, 3615 Wisconsin Ave., NW, Washington, D.C.

Fare for the reluctant reader. Anita E. Dunn and others. Annotated list selected for junior and senior high readers. Books chosen to reflect teenage interests. Capitol Area School Development Association, Albany, N.Y., 1964.

Gateways to readable books. Ruth Strang and others. Annotated graded list on many topics for adolescents who find reading difficult. (4th ed.) Wilson, 1966.

Good reading for disadvantaged readers. George Spache. Garrard Publishing Co., 1972.

Good reading for poor readers. George Spache. Useful in elementary and junior high school. Garrard Publishing Co., 1972.

High interest--easy reading for junior and senior high school reluctant readers. Raymond C. Emery, Margaret B. Houshower. National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), 1965.

High interest--easy reading for junior and senior high school students. Compiled by Marian White. Most recent National Council of Teachers of English list, 1972.

High interest--low vocabulary booklist. Education Clinic, Boston University School of Education, 332 Bay State Road, Boston, Mass.

Mod-mod read-in book list. Fifty titles with one-line annotations prepared especially for black, potential dropouts. Hertzberg New Method, Inc., Vandalia Road, Jacksonville, IL.

"Offbeat paperbacks for your classroom," by George J. Becker. Journal of Reading (November, 1971), pp. 127-129.

Vocations in biography and fiction: an annotated list of books for young people. Kathryn A. Haebich. 1,070 titles, mostly biographies. Includes some titles of high interest, low reading level for grades 9-12. American Library Association (ALA), 1962.

Booklists for Special Subjects

AAAS science booklist for young adults. Hilary J. Deason. American Association for the Advancement of Science, 15151 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20005.

Adult 100 books: a gateway to better intergroup understanding. American Jewish Committee, 1969.

An index to young readers' collective biographies. Judith Silverman. Lists 471 collective biographies for elementary and middle school kids. Bowker, 1970.

A bibliography of recreational mathematics. William Schaaf. Useful list for building a classroom library. National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1906 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091.

A place to start. Robert Leibert. Lists thousands of titles appropriate to school subject areas, especially social studies. Includes reading level, interest level, author and publisher. Reading Center, University of Missouri, 52nd and Holmes, Kansas City, MO 64110.

Bibliotherapy. Corrine Riggs. Annotated bibliography of sources on bibliotherapy. International Reading Association.

Books about Negro life for children. Augusta Baker. Annotated list of books arranged by subject and age level. Includes criteria for selection. New York Public Library.

Books in American history: a basic list for high schools. John E. Wiltz. Annotations of more than 300 titles suitable for high schools, arranged by historical period. Gives publisher and price. Includes paperback editions where available. Indiana University Press, Bloomington IN 47401.

Children and books. May Arbuthnot and Zena Sutherland. Valuable resource book in locating literature for children and young people. Scott Foresman, 1972.

The high school mathematics library. William Schaaf, 800 titles. Includes magazine titles and publishers directory. National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1906 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091.

Historical fiction: a guide for junior and senior high schools and colleges. Hannah Logasa. Also for the general reader. McKinley Press, Philadelphia, 1974.

Mathematics library--elementary and junior high school. Clarence Hardgrove and Herbert Miller. Annotated bibliography of mathematics books for classroom library. Includes grade level K-9. National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1906 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091.

Negro literature of high school students. Barbara Dodds. National Council of Teachers of English, 1968.

Outstanding biographies for college bound students and outstanding fiction for college bound students. Young Adult Service, Division, American Library Association.

Reading ladders for human relations. Muriel Crosby. Annotated list of over 1,000 books for children and young people, developed around six human relations themes. American Council of Education, One DuPont Circle, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Red, white and black: (and brown and yellow). Jarold H. Laskey. Combines Paperback Exhibit. Scarborough Park, Albany Post Road, Briarcliff Manor, N.Y. 10510, 1970.

Reference materials for school libraries. Cora Paul Bomar and others. Designed as a guide in selecting and using reference materials in North Carolina Schools, grades 1-12. Publications, State Department of Public Instruction, Raleigh, N.C. 1965.

We build together. Charlemar Rollins. Selected list of black fiction, history, biography, poetry, folklore, music, science and sports. National Council of Teachers of English, 1967.

Booklists for Current Titles

Booklist and subscription books bulletin. A guide to current books published twice a month, September through July, and once in August. Reviews recommended books for children, young people and adults, giving full buying and cataloging information and analytical notes. Includes annual list of notable children's books. American Library Association.

Choice. A monthly magazine which reviews carefully and in detail books for colleges. Especially valuable for selecting books for mature high school students. American Library Association.

The horn book magazine. Discriminating reviews of books for children and young people, along with articles on children's literature. Carries regular section on science books and on adult books for young people. Includes annual list of outstanding books. The Horn Book, Inc., 585 Boylston St., Boston, Mass.

Library journal. Published twice monthly. Valuable for reviews of adult books for high schools on all subjects. In the issue which comes out the 15th of the month, School library journal is included. R. R. Bowker.

School library journal. Monthly, September through May. Brief reviews of books recommended and not recommended for grades K-12. Articles of interest to teachers and school librarians; special lists (professional reading, free and inexpensive materials, paperbacks). R. R. Bowker.

Guest Editorial

T.(T.)C.C.P. or just (*)

Robert A. McKeag
University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh

Do you have difficulty understanding the title above? Small wonder! It is difficult to comprehend, because it reduces a fairly "jargony" phrase, (Teacher (Text) Caused Comprehension Problems) which takes some re-reading to begin with, to almost meaningless "alphabet soup". Later in the text we can shorten T.(T.)C.C.P. to just an asterisk (*) as we make the difficult still more abstract and unclear. Every reading teacher knows that this movement from unfamiliar and abstract to more abstract is a procedure that is just the opposite of the accepted ways to build understanding and "comprehension."

Yet I am contending here that too often comprehension problems can be teacher or text caused. Reading teachers are concerned about reading comprehension and are trying to do something about it. Sometimes, however, we need to look in the mirror or at least into our own practices for answers to the problem of comprehension.

The problem in the title here is the jargony "alphabet soup." Teachers and texts too often use difficult-to-understand terms such as SQ3R, USSR, or SSR, DRA, CSSD, TQLR, and i/t/a for instance. A reading teacher usually has little difficulty interpreting this stuff, but then, he knew the content before he ran into the "alphabet soup". This is not the case with students in our classes who are trying to learn the content and don't know the terms already. Teachers need to be aware of the existence

of jargon, technical words, and "alphabet soups" in their texts and in their teaching.

Often I have seen students "comprehend" when the teacher does some translating--"You see this could be written another way." The student immediately shows that he understands--and the teacher can scratch one comprehension problem. This re-stating of textbook ideas into words that are more easily understood (and usually less jargony) is illustrated for me every time I put together one of those "easily assembled" items I purchase with the "easy-to-follow directions." Very often the directions are not easy to follow and, in fact, are not written very clearly at all. Textbooks can be this way. Teachers unfortunately sometimes aren't as clear or easy to follow as they could be either. When teachers and texts use big words in place of simpler, more straight forward language, they are causes of comprehension problems rather than a part of the solution to such problems.

"The edifice collapsed" is more difficult to comprehend than, "The house fell down." I don't believe that "the edifice" says it any more exactly than "the house." Teachers and texts should not be afraid to use simple rather than complex language. Where technical language can not be simplified for teaching and learning, as for instance the word, photosynthesis, the technical word must be taught before the reading assignment is given. In the example about the collapse above, "edifice" would be a word a teacher would have to present in preparation for reading and learning. In this way we go from the familiar and concrete to the new or unknown word or idea, which of course is part of the solution to comprehension problems.

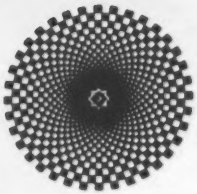
There are other ways that T.(T.)C.C.P. can come about in addition to the use of difficult or abstract language. Sometimes teachers and texts make the mistake of assuming or insisting that there is only one way to achieve or to communicate what we have achieved. The student who has only one way of showing that he has understood the reading selection, for example by answering six questions, may not be able to demonstrate comprehension. If he were provided other ways, through drawings or music selections, or dramatic role playing perhaps he might be able to show that he did understand and we can

scratch off another "comprehension problem." Teachers and texts would not ask a blind student to demonstrate comprehension only through reading and writing, neither should we lock other students into only one dimension.

T.(T.)C.C.P. can also occur when teachers and texts overlook the experience base required for comprehension. Teachers using a language experience approach to reading and learning discover that students can understand rather complex material if they have experienced as well as read it. Students in a science lab who watch the ice melt and turn to steam only to be re-frozen as the temperature drops comprehend terms such as solid, liquid, and gas as well as the complicated relation to heat better by experiencing it than by just reading about it. Good science teachers have demonstrated this for years.

T.(T.)C.C.P. (hereafter just indicated by *) can come about in many other ways of course. We need to check the readability of our teaching materials. We need to check the study and comprehension aids, such as glossaries, available in our texts and materials. We need to be aware of findings in socio-linguistics and psycho-linguistics that cast light on reading comprehension especially for minority group students.

In summary this all comes down to emphasizing that teachers should be alert to the possibility of (*) and make every effort to avoid it. Every teacher I know wants to be a part of the solution rather than a part of the problem. We will have made great strides, I think, in the improvement of reading comprehension when we, as teachers, work to remove T. and (T.) from (*). Though it is not the complete answer, it is part of the answer--and it is something we can do something about.



RESOURCES FOR READING TEACHERS

by

Mildred Hoffmann
Reading Resource Instructional Specialist
Milwaukee Public Schools

What are "resources for teachers" related to comprehension? They could be comprehension kits, comprehension task cards, comprehension worksheets related to a basal text, comprehension tapes, etc.; for "resources for teachers" with comprehension in the title are numerous. The quality of these resources varies greatly and the evaluation of their quality appears to be related to how one defines comprehension. According to dictionaries and a thesaurus, to comprehend is to understand; to know; to grasp the nature, significance or meaning; to discern; to conceive; to perceive; etc. Reading teachers frequently relate comprehension to UNDERSTANDING PRINT and often indicate that comprehension is the ultimate skill in reading, the purpose for decoding, the crux of written communication. To help students understand what they read appears to be a well-accepted, often verbalized goal in reading; and frequently, this goal is implemented via instructional objectives, criterion-referenced tests, and teaching materials that appear to define comprehension as a special skill, rather than the basis of all skills. Frank Smith warns us of the danger of such oversimplification. He suggests that,

> We should be careful not to take one step forward by making comprehension a main concern and two steps back by expecting that it can be fitted into an operation-

> alized straitjacket, taught (and measured) in small packages. Rather comprehension should be regarded as a condition always to be fostered, both by ensuring that activities and materials always make sense to children and by helping children to develop conceptual frameworks and strategies of enquiry relevant to the skills we expect them to master. (Smith, 1977)

It would appear that comprehension should be an inherent component in every reading experience and that all readers should be working to establish processes that enhance comprehension. Constance McCullough in her 1975 "State of the Art" letter to members of the International Reading Association described these processes:

> The reading process appears to include active consideration of the meaning of what has been read and concern for what will be encountered; raising one's own questions, forming expectations of ideas to come, correcting interpretations when the expected does not occur, proceeding to new expectations and new questions, seeing pattern in the author's design of thought and expression, and predicting how the pattern will be extended. (McCullough, 1975)

To build a foundation for reading success even pre-readers can begin to establish the reading habits of prediction, testing their hypotheses, and confirmation or modification of their predictions. Young children, pre-schoolers and pre-readers, may be taught to predict and to use their experiences and the context to extract meaning from stories they hear and wordless picture books they experience. As children begin to read they would add the skills of phonics and structural analysis, however, primary concern would be on essential meaning rather than on precise word identification.

The reading model described by Weaver is based on the use of prediction, experience and context prior to the use of "word attack".

> According to this model, meaning is the starting point as well as the end-product: learning to read involves

> learning to bring meaning to the written page as well as learning to actively seek meaning from the written page. Instead of learning skills for proceeding from small units to larger or for dealing with words as if they occurred in isolation, children learn strategies for predicting what will come next, then testing and confirming or correcting their predictions. Letter/sound correspondences are taught in context, so as not to distort the essential nature of the reading process. (Weaver, 1977)

Proponents of a model such as the one described by Weaver probably would view all reading materials of interest to the student as vehicles to teach the comprehension skills; therefore, the "resources for teachers" related to comprehension that follow in the bibliography are more in terms of process rather than specific instructional materials.

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THEME "Literacy: A Basic Human Right"

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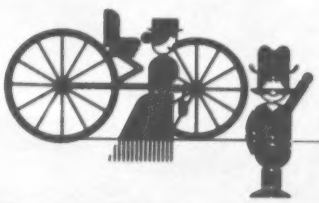

TWENTY-THIRD
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Professional Materials On Review

Virgie M. McIntyre. Reading Strategies and Enrichment Activities for Grades 4-9. Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, Columbus, OH. 1977 (paperback).

Reviewed by
Thomas Blount
Reading Specialist
Eau Claire Area Public Schools

Reading instruction in the middle grades, 4-9, has been maligned as ineffective and inappropriate. The upper elementary grade student finds a greater emphasis on the content skills in social studies, science, health, and math, and is too often unprepared to apply the basic reading processes to those subjects. The transfer of skills becomes an even greater cause of frustration for unprepared junior high school students as they find themselves buried in the content readings.

Reading Strategies and Enrichment Activities for Grades 4-9, written by Virgie M. McIntyre, is, as the title suggests, a blend of instructional strategies and a bulk of related activities for the middle grade teacher. In the preface to the 350 page, fifteen chapter text, Ms. McIntyre comments, "Though based on theory, it is not a theoretical book. Though many practice and reinforcement exercises are given, it is not a practice manual. I prefer to think of it as a resource book for busy people in search of different ideas." If the reader is willing to abide by those statements and not expect more than is promised, the book can become a useful professional resource. If, however, the reader is looking for a detailed and definitive explanation of a particular theory such as

the section in Chapter Four, "Solving the Major Cause of Teacher Ineffectiveness in Reading", the typically brief treatment may prove the test to be a disappointment.

The strength of the text certainly lies in its abundance of suggestions and activities. In her attempt to provide meaningful material, Ms. McIntyre has demonstrated a strong commitment to the emotions and feelings of the students as she states, "In grades 4-9, it's imperative that the materials and structure center around problems, interests and everyday situations of the students. This is the transition stage, where they decide to stay with school or to drop out." The author does a respectable job of following up on that point as she presents a personal approach to diagnosis in the classroom. The reader might have difficulty there, though, with the format as a few lengthy examples disrupt the flow of ideas. In contrast, a succeeding chapter on using test data for planning instructional strategies seems to be a compact collection of notions and facts on the topic.

Practical ideas and usable instructional strategies for vocabulary, comprehension, and study skills really flourish in the middle chapters. The question of the transfer of these skills to the regular classroom assignments and materials is also a notable concern of Ms. McIntyre's text. Motivation is seen as a key factor in the learning process. The exemplary exercises, suggestions and activities all seem to be derived from her commitment to provide relevant and motivating learning tasks.

Surveying the final chapters, the reader will encounter brief segmented treatments of well documented topics which relate to a particular chapter's theme. The array of ideas and topics may, however, prove disconcerting to some and may cause others to seek the index and bibliography for a sense of unity and identity of topics. In the appendix, the teacher is finally offered a fast moving six week plan for implementing a variety of study skills in grades 7, 8, or 9.

As brief and disjointed as some parts of the text may seem, the author offers an opportunity for professional growth with and an awareness of middle grade reading programs. Ms. McIntyre exemplifies further her belief in the potential of middle grade

students as she concludes, "Students need the chance to discover, to experience, to grow, and from learning under mature guidance, to choose their own lifestyle according to their own inclinations."

Cunningham. Arthur. and Cunningham. Classroom Reading Instruction K-5 Alternative Approaches. D.C. Heath and Company. Lexington, Mass. 1977.

Reviewed by
Roger J. Quealy
Department of Elementary Education
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

One of the commonest questions I get from in-service teachers is, "Is there a new text or new approach to teaching reading that I should become acquainted with?" The only unique text that I have seen in the past several years is Classroom Reading Instruction K-5 by Cunningham, Arthur, and Cunningham. It does not consist of separate chapters on readiness, word identification, comprehension, critical reading, children's literature, and methods of teaching reading as do virtually all others. Nor does it present various theoretical constructs and concomitant research citations to support the author's contentions. Rather, this text presents alternative approaches to elementary school reading teaching as carried out in daily classroom settings.

The text makes extensive year-long visits to model classrooms continuously available for all to study. As one reads this book one sees a set of 24 children develop from kindergarteners to fifth graders at a particular elementary school in North Carolina. The children capture the interest of the reader and show varying reactions to reading approaches but the actual focus of the book is upon the varied approaches used by each of the teachers. The approaches, indeed, are not new nor are they necessarily the only appropriate techniques, but the approaches demonstrate in all cases adaptations of original approaches.

> "Mrs. Wright, for example, uses a basic language experience approach to reading, but it is not a language experience approach a la Stauffer or Allen. It is Mrs. Wright's version of language experience. These adaptations are intentional; it is not the author's desire that the reader who decides to try the language experience approach will do it exactly as Mrs. Wright does, but rather that the reader will further adapt it so that it becomes language experience a la that reader."

The authors do not suggest that children should have a different approach to reading instruction every year. Rather, they intend to show in this continuous diary established through an effective introduction and overview and by monthly summaries how any teacher might implement a reading program for the entire class with all necessary supporting reading activities. There are two other segments of the text. One set for each grade level is titled, "For the reader to do," which provides an opportunity for the individual reader to apply knowledge gained from study. The other citation is, "For readers to do together," which offers opportunities for groups of teachers to talk about and deal with various concepts presented within the book.

Unique is a term which ought to be used by a reader carefully. I totally believe that this textbook is unique!

"Children generally hate to be idle. All the care then should be, that their busy humor should be constantly employed in something that is of use to them."

Locke

Robinson, H. Alan and others. Strategies for Reading. Allyn and Bacon, Inc. Boston, Mass. 1978. (four workbooks)

Reviewed by
Suzanne Jund
Reading Specialist
New Berlin High School

Each year publishing companies produce scores of texts, kits, workbooks, audio visual aids, and other materials designed to remedy reading deficiencies or captivate reluctant learners. Strategies for Reading, by H. Alan Robinson et. al., which has just been published by Allyn and Bacon is more than just another set of workbooks to be used to "occupy" a secondary student's time. The books emphasize specific comprehension strategies or groups of skills which will help the student learn to understand his school textbooks and supplementary material. The first three of the workbooks each contain ten comprehension strategies which can be applied to reading tasks in the various content areas. The fourth book presents five strategies for reading longer selections; additional practice in using the newly acquired skills is provided at the end of this book.

The titles of the books in this series are--Strategies for Reading: Sentences, Strategies for Reading: Words In Context, Strategies for Reading: Paragraphs, and Strategies for Reading: Long Selections. The authors have designed these study materials to be used by students with a minimum of teacher help. After using the first strategy as an introduction, students are encouraged to work independently, check their own work, and confer with the teacher about differences between their answers and those provided by the authors.

That these strategy-workbooks have "grown out of the authors' interpretation of recent research in reading which is largely based on psycholinguistic theories of reading," is evident. Strategies for Reading has been designed to help junior/senior high school students comprehend more successfully by teaching them to observe the cues in the text. Each lesson is composed of four sections: 1) an INTRODUCTION, which has a readiness section and builds upon the students' prior knowledge, 2) a TRY IT part in

which the learner tries out the strategy on sample items, 3) a PRACTICE IT section which allows the student to practice the strategy independently, and 4) the USE IT portion of the lesson which encourages the learner to transfer the acquired skill to content-type materials.

In content classrooms, reading centers, and as an in-service resource aid these four workbooks are proving to be a unique and useful instructional tool.

READING RESOURCE BOOK

by
Sister Rita Marie Will
Sister Rita Eisterhold

Elementary reading educators should take special note of the Reading Resource Book which was developed over a period of three years by two of our members, Sister Rita Marie Will and Sister Rita Eisterhold. The 268 page resource book "offers information about current reading programs, tests, and materials." Written by teachers who work with students every day, this book contains hundreds of helpful ideas for classroom teachers and reading specialists. To purchase this book send a check for $7.00 payable to Department of Education, Reading Services and mail to:

Wisconsin Interdiocesan Reading Committee
Department of Education
P.O. Box 2018
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201

From the Editor

The January issue of the WSRA Journal contained an evaluation form which asked our readers to help assess our publication and plan for 1978-79. The results of the survey will be announced in the May issue. The editorial staff wishes to thank everyone who participated.

The editorial staff would also like to welcome Dr. James Raabe from Onalaska who will replace Jane Sauer as an Assistant Editor. Like the other members of the editorial team, Dr. Raabe will be evaluating manuscripts submitted for possible publication in our Journal and supplying information about prospective authors and suitable topics. Dr. Raabe's expertise in reading and his administrative experience should make him a valuable member of the Journal's staff.

To Jane Sauer we'd like to say a well-deserved thank you. Jane's years of service to the WSRA and to the promotion of excellence in reading instruction are well known. Although she remains active as a reading educator for the Merrill Public Schools, Jane has decided to use her talents in new ways. From all of us, Jane, many thanks.

The January issue of the Journal which was developed about the theme, TESTING AND EVALUATION IN READING, has received some recognition. Because that issue contains timely articles dealing with the implementation of Chapter 29 (reading legislation) and with various aspects of the proficiency testing controversy, there has been an increasing demand for extra copies. If you would like to purchase a copy to present to your superintendent or to your state legislator, please send your check for $2.00 (payable to WSRA) to the editor. Please remember that supplies are limited.

Suzanne Jund, Editor